

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 /085 W

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R 171203Z JUN75

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3965

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NOUAKCHOTT 1219

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR SS MR SP AG MO

SUBJECT: ELABORATION OF MAURITANIAN POSITION ON DECOLONIALIZATION
OF SPANISH SAHARA

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 1074 B. STATE 132586

1. SUMMARY: GIRM FOREIGN MINISTER ELABORATED ON PREVIOUS
STATEMENTS OF MAURITANIAN POSITION ON SPANISH SAHARA JUNE 13,
AND OUTLINED GIRM'S VIEWS ON AND EXPECTATIONS FOR DECOLONIZLIZATION
PROCESS. AFTER LISTENING ATTENTIVELY TO MY PRESENTATION OF US
RESPONSE TO HIS MAY 31 REQUEST FOR US INTERVENTION WITH
SPAIN (REF A), MOUKNASS (A) ASSERTED CREATION OF INDEPENDENT
STATE FOR HANDFUL SAHARAN INHABITANTS WAS "ABSURD"; (B)
DECLARED INDEPENDENT SAHARAN STATE WOULD INEVITABLY BE WEAK
AND WOULD AS RESULT POSE SERIOUS SECURITY PROBLEM FOR
GIRM AND FOR USG; (C) EXPRESSED CERTAINTY INTERNATIONAL
COURT WOULD CONCLUDE THAT PRIOR TO SPANISH OCCUPATION, SAHARA HAD
BEEN DIVIDED INTO TWO "ZONES OF INFLUENCE", ONE MOROCCAN
ONE MAURITANIAN; (D) ONCE AGAIN STATED ECONOMIC ASPECT OF
SAHARA PROBLEM WOULD BE RESOLVED EASILY ON TECHNICAL BASIS;
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AND (E) RESPONDED HE SAW NO WAY UN PRESENCE IN SAHARA COULD

CONTRIBUTE TO RESOLUTION OF PROBLE.

2. AFTER TWO WEEKS OF INTENSIVE ACTIVITY ON SPANISH SAHARA (HOSTING FIVE DAY OBSERVATION VISIT OF UN DECOLONIALIZATION COMMITTEE, TWELVE HOUR OVERNIGHT VISIT OF UN SYG WALDHEIM, AND FORTY-EIGHT HOUR TRIP TO ALGERIA AND MOROCCO FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH KING HASSAN AND PRESIDENT BOUDEDIENNE), MAURITANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER HAMDI OULD MOUKNASS RESPONDED TO MY STANDING REQUEST FOR APPOINTMENT WITH MEETING JUNE ", DAY AFTER HIS RETURN FROM ALGIERS. I OPENED SESSION WITH PRESENTATION OF US RESPONSE TO MINISTER'S MAY 31 REQUEST FOR US INTERVENTION WITH GOVT OF SPAIN (US SHARES GIRM DESIRE FOR PEACEFUL SOUTION, NOTES GOS IS IN PROCESS OF ORGANIZING CONFERENCE OF STATES CONCERNED TO WORK OUT DETAILED DECOLONIZATION PROCEDURE) AND REITERATED EARLIER STATEMENT THAT US HAS AND WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW POLICY OF STRICT NEUTRALITY IN SAHARA DISPUTE WHILE AT SAME TIME URGING ALL INTERESTED PARTIES TO PRESS AHEAD WITH FORMULATION OF REASONABLE AND ABOVE ALL PACIFIC SOLUTION TO THIS COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT PROBLEM. AT CONCLUSION MY PRESENTATION, FORIEGN MINISTER STATED HE WISHED MAKE TWO OBSERVATIONS: FIRST - CREATION OF INDEPENDENT STATE FOR GROUP OF PEOPLE NUMBERING AT ABSOLUTE MAXIMUM 60,000 WAS "ABSURD". SECOND - LDN INDEPENDENT STATE IN WESTERN SAHARA WOULD INEVITABLY BE WEAK, AND WOULD BE VULNERABLE TO OUTSIDE MEDDLING. AS CONSEQUENCE, IT WOULD POSE SERIOUS SECURITY PROBLEM FOR GIRM AND FOR US. WHILE MOST IMMEDIATE SECURITY PROBLEM WOULD BE ONE CONFRONTING GIRM IN FORM OF COMMON FRONTIER STRETCHING SEVERAL HUNDRED KILOMETERS ACROSS DESERT, US WOULD ALSO FACE SERIOUS SECURITY PROBLEM. WHEN I BLANDLY AGREED WEAK STATE MIGHT POSE PROBLEM FOR NEIGHBORS IN REGION AND THUS INDIRECTLY FOR USG, MOUKNASS INSISTED US WOULD FAVY DIRECT AND CRITICAL SECURITY PROBLEM ON HIGHER PLANE. HE CAREFULLY REFRAINED FROM IDENTIFYING THREAT, BUT IMPLIED THAT A NUMBER OF STATES COULD BE COUNTED UP TO EXPLOIT VACUUM IN SAHARA TO REAL DISADVANTAGE OF US. (PREVIOUS MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR IN OUTLINING CLOSELY PARRALLEL ARGUMENT TO EMBOFF SEVERAL MONTHS AGO HINTED EVEN MORE BORADLY THAT SOVVIETS WOULD BE CERTAIN TO EXPLOIT WEAK SAHARA STAE. MOUKNASS, IN FDITION, MAY HAVE MOROCCANS IN MIND AS POTENTIAL

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INTERVENORS.) MOUKNASS THEN ONCE AGAIN SET ECONOMIC ASPECT OF SAHARA ISSUE TO TNE SIDE, DECLARING TASK OF DEVISIING CONTINUING ARRANGEMENT WITH SPANISH ENTREPRENEURS OR OF REIMBURSING THEM FOR THEIR INVESTMENTS IN PHOSPHATE INDUSTRY WAS TECHNICAL PROBLEM WHICH COULD BE RESOLVED REASONABLY EASILY BY EPXERTS. TOUCHING BRIEFLY ON VISIT OF UN COMMISSION, FOREIGN MINISTER REPORTED GIRM HAD MADE CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO PERMIT ANYONE INTERESTED TO EXPRESS

HIS VIEWS FREELY TO COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES; HE NOTED THAT POLISARIO ADHERENTS HAD MET COMMITTEE IN SEVERAL MAURITANIAN CITIES. ILLUSTRATING FREE ACCESS TO UN GROUP, MOUKNASS INDICATED GIRM HAD BEEN CALLED UPON TO STEP IN AND REFEREE CONFRONTATION IN NOUADHIBOU BETWEEN POLISARIO SAHARANS AND OTHERS ADVOCATING UNION WITH MAURITANIA. REFERRING TO JUST COMPLETED WHIRLWIND TRIP TO ALGERIA AND MOROCCO, MOUKNASS REPORTED THAT ALGERIANS HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY VERY MUCH WANTED TO ACCEPT SOLUTION WHICH SATISFIED INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES OF MAURITANIANS AND MOROCCANS. BUT, PRESIDENT BOUDEDIENNE HAD TOLD MAURITANIAN PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH, HE SIMPLY DID NOT SEE HOW HE COULD SUPPORT SELF-DETERMINATION IN ZAMBABWE, IN NAMIBIA, AND IN A HOST OF OTHER PLACES IN AFRICA AND AROUND THE WORLD AND NOT SUPPORT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR HIS ARAB BROTHERS NEXT DOOR IN SAHARA. AFTER VOLUNTEERING THIS REVEALING ANECDOTE ABOUT BOUOEDIENNE, MOUKNASS (STILL CLEARLY UPSET BY RECENT SPANISH MOVES), NEVERTHELESS LAUNCHED INTO SHARP CRITICISM OF GOS FOR INSISTING ON REFERENDUM IN SAHARA AND FOR CATERING TO INDEPENDENCE DESIRES OF VOCAL BUT INSIGNIFICANT GROUPING OF SHARA RESIDENTS.

3. WHEN I ASKED MINISTER HOW GIRM SAW SITUATION DEVELOPING AND WHAT SORT OF SCENARIO IT ENVISAGED, MOUKNASS REPLIED THAT FIRST STEP WAS INTERNATIONAL COURT'S ADVISORY OPINION. NOTING THAT COURT WAS MADE UP OF HIGHLY COMPETENT AND INTELLECTUALLY HONEST JURISTS, HE EXPRESSED CERTAINTY JUDGES WOULD CONCLUDE THAT PRIOR TO SPANISH OCCUPATION

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SAHARA HAD BEEN DIVIDED INTO TWO "ZONES OF INFLUENCE": ONE MOROCCA, THE OTHER EMANATING FROM AREA WHICH IS PRESENT DAY MAURITANIA. HE DECLARED COURT COULD REACH NO OTHER CONCLUSION BECAUSE THIS WAS FACT OF MATTER. HE BRIEFLY RECAPPED HIS PREVIOUS DISCUSSION OF CLOSE TIES BETWEEN MAURITANIANS AND THEIR KINSMEN IN SAHARA, AND DECLARED THERE WAS A SINGLE PEOPLE FROM EL AAIUN IN NORTH TO KIFFA IN SOUTH. MINISTER CONTINUED THAT WITH ADVISORY OPINION IN HAND, GENERAL ASSEMBLY COULD WORK OUT DETAILED DECOLONIZATION SCENARIO. HE EMPHASIZED THAT DETAILED PROGRAM WOULD HAVE TO PROVIDE FOR DEPARTURE OF "EVEY SPANISH SOLDIER, EVERY SPANISH POLICEMAN, EVERY SPANISH FUNCTIONARY". WHEN I INQUIRED WHETHER GIRM ENVISAGED A UN PRESENCE AT ANY STATE, MINISTER IMMEDIATELY REPLIED IN NEGATIVE. TRYING ANOTHER TACK, ASKED IF GIRM SAW ANY ROLE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS COULD PLAY IN A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD DURING OR AFTER SPANISH WITHDRAWAL. MINISTER AGAIN SAID NO. HE EXPLICITLY RECOGNIZED WEST IRIAN PRECEDENT, BUT DECLARED SUCH ARRANGEMENT WAS NOT REALLY APPLICABLE TO SAHARA, AND IN ANY EVENT WAS NEITHER NECESSARY NOR DESIRABLE.

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4. AS RELAXED AND SOMEWHAT PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUE DEVELOPED, I NOTED THAT MANY OBSERVERS, AND IN PARTICULAR A NUMBER OF AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENTIST COMMENTATORS, HAD VERY REAL DIFFICULTY INTELLECTUALLY IN ATTEMPTING TO SQUARE HISTORIC US DEDICATION TO PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION, ENUNCIATED SOME SIXTY YEARS AGO BY PRESIDENT WILSON, WITH AMERICAN PRAGMATIC CAST OF MIND WHICH PRESSED US TO ACCEPT THE INVENTORY OF PRACTICAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST "MINI-STATES". EXPLICITLY RECALLING MINISTER'S COMMENT ABOUT BOUMEDIENNE AND SUGGESTING THAT PERHAPS SPANISH AS WELL HAD ENCOUNTERED SAME HURDLE OF PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION IN SEARCHING FOR RESOLUTION OF SAHARA SITUATION, I ASKED MINISTER HOW GIRM RECONCILED THESE CONFLICTING PRINCIPLES. MOJKNASS, AFTER A MOMENT'S REFLECTION, REPLIED THAT ONE MUST EXAMINE EVERY PRINCIPLE AGAINST SPECIFIC EMPIRICAL REFERENCE, AND IF APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLE TO CONCRET REALITY RESULTED IN "ABSURDITY", AS IT DID IN THIS INSTANCE, PRINCIPLE MUST BE SET TO ONE SIDE AND CONFLICTING PRINCIPLE APPLIED. HOWEVER, RECOGNIZING PERHAPS FOR FIRST TIME THAT THIS CONFLICT OF PRINCIPLE WAS REAL AND THAT IT POSED SERIOUS

PROBLEM FOR OTHERS AS WELL AS FOR PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENNE, MOUKNASS SUGGESTED THAT PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION MIGHT BE APPLIED IN SAHARA BY ALLOWING INHABITANTS TO CHOOSE ZONE OF INFLUENCE THEY WISHED TO LIVE IN. HE IMMEDIATELY AND VIGOROUSLY INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT SAHARANS MUST BE AND WOULD BE DENIED RIGHT TO CHOOSE INDEPENDENCE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF MINI-STATE.

5. COMMENT: I CAME AWAY WITH DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT MOUKNASS AND HIS GIRM COLLEAGUES HAVE BEEN SO PREOCCUPIED WITH THEIR SINGLE SOLUTION TO SAHARAN PROBLEM AND THEIR BELIEF, NOW SHATTERED, THAT THEY HAD ANOTHER 3 OR 4 YEARS IN WHICH TO BERATE SPANISH AND NEGOTIATE GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF MOROCCAN/MAURITANIAN PARTITION, THEY HAVE FAILED TO APPRECIATE VERY REAL PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM INVOLVED IN SUBORDINATION OF PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION TO TERRITORIAL ASPIRATIONS OF ADJACENT STATES (WHETHER SELFISH OR RESULT OF SINCERE BELIEF IN ONENESS OF PEOPLE INVOLVED). THEY HAVE ALSO FAILED TO APPRECIATE VERY REAL POLITICAL PROBLEM POSED BY HISTORIC INTERNATIONAL AND AFRICAN DEDICATION TO SELF-DETERMINATION WHICH HAS BEEN ENSHRINED IN DECLARATIONS OF LEAGUE

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OF NATIONS, UN, AND OAU. SINGLE-MINDED INSISTENCE OF AMBASSADOR AKE AND HIS COMMITTEE OF 24 COLLEAGUES ON APPLICATION OF SELF-DETERMINATION TO SHARA PERHAPS GAVE GIRM FIRST GLIMMER OF WIDESPREAD POTENTIAL OPPOSITION TO MOROCCAN-MAURITANIAN DEAL, AND THUS CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF TACTICAL PROBLEM WHICH TWO TERRITORIAL ASPIRANTS FACE. BOUMEDIENNE'S PHILOSOPHICAL OBJECTION, COMING FROM ARAB BROTHER AND INTIMATE FRIEND, CANNOT BE DISMISSED QUITE SO LIGHTLY. BELATED RECOGNITION THAT SPANISH AND OTHERS MAY ALSO BE GENUINELY TROUBLED BY INHERENT PHILOSOPHICAL CONFLICT MAY WELL PROMPT MOUKNASS TO RE-EVALUATE HIS TACTICAL PLANNING, AND TO RECONSIDER DESIRABILITY OF TRANSITIONAL UN PRESENCE. INTRODUCTION OF UN WOULD PERMIT MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS (AND THEIR SAHARAN FRIENDS) TO PAY LIP SERVICE TO PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND AT SAME TIME GIVE THEM ENOUGH TIME TO ASSURE PROPER OUTCOME OF UN-RUN REFERENDUM. IT WOULD ALSO PROVIDE REST OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WAY TO SET ASIDE SACRED POLITICAL PRINCIPLE IN FAVOR OF WHAT IS PROBABLY MOST PRACTICABLE TO WORKABLE SOLUTION: PARTITION. SAHARA MAY BE VIABLE ECONOMICALLY AND IN SHORT RUN, PERHAPS, POLITICALLY. BUT GIVEN APPETITES AND CAPABILITIES OF MOROCCANS, ALGERIANS, MILITARY SAHARANS. AND EVEN MAURITANIANS IN TIME, INDEPENDENT STATE IN SAHARA WOULD ENERGIZE CONFLICTING WELTER OF IRREDENTIST ASPIRATIONS AND GEOPOLITICAL COUNTER-ACTIONS WHICH WOULD DESTABILIZE REGION UNTIL ONE OF PLAYERS GREW STRONG ENOUGH TO IMPOSE HIS SOLUTION ON ALL THE OTHERS. HANDY SIDE

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